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ABSTRACT

For many people in the United States it is necessary and valuable to learn to live biculturally. This is specifically true of Native Americans, because they are one large group of peoples who desire to maintain their own identity, values, and cultural norms rather than be assimilated into the melting pot of America. In order to understand the complexity of bicultural education as seen from the perspective of American Indians, it is necessary to look at how education in America works and does not work for Indian students. This paper reviews the cultural differences between Indians and non-Indians, presents a brief summary of the history and political interaction between the Indian and non-Indian worlds, and reports on the development of various approaches to and trends in Indian education. It examines the Indian world view, spiritual views, sociological world view, economic system, and political world view. A discussion of Indian education explains the relationship of the Bureau of Indian Affairs with Indian peoples. Current trends in Indian education indicate that educators are demonstrating an increased awareness of the needs of children from other cultures. There are many programs designed specifically to educate Indian adults to become teachers of their own children. The paper concludes with a case study of a successful Indian teacher education program on the Navajo reservation in Arizona. (SM)

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Bicultural Education Among Indian Americans

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> What sets worlds in motion is the interplay of differences, their attractions and repulsions. Life is plurality, death is uniformity. By suppressing differences and peculiarities, by eliminating different civilizations and cultures, progress weakens life and favors death. The ideal of a single civilization for everyone, implicit in the cult of progress and technique, impoverishes and mutilates us. Every view of the world that becomes extinct, every culture that disappears, diminishes a possibility of life. (Octavio Paz, 1967).

For many people in the United States it is necessary and valuable to learn to live biculturally. This is specifically true of Native Americans. They are one large group of peoples who desire to maintain their own identity, values and cultural norms rather than be assimilated into the melting pot of America. They may be singular in this desire. In order to understand that complexity of bicultural education as seen from the perspective of Indians in this country it is necessary to look at the various parts of a collage of where and how education in America works, and indeed doesn't work, for Indian students. To do this, this paper will review the cultural differences of Indians and non-Indians, look at a brief summary of the history and political interaction between the Indian and non-Indian worlds, and finally report on the development of various approaches to Indian education and the current trends in Indian education.

In looking at Indian culture it needs to be noted that when this continent was invaded by Europeans in 1492 (Highwater, 1981), there was a huge variety of Indian tribes and cultures living and prospering. Speaking of one Indian culture oversimplifies the picture, but for the sake of this survey we will look at those cultural traits shared be many tribes in North America. The reader needs to keep in mind that the cultural values we will be considering refer to traditional, largely rural Indians, rather than urban Indians. There are, of course, any number of Indians who have become totally assimilated into the dominant culture and are referred to by some traditional Indians as "Apple Indians," red on the outside and white on the inside.

The Indian World View

Judeo-Christian values influence the pervading world view of the dominant culture in the United States. It is the world view held by western Europeans and imported to North America with the immigrants from those geographical regions. This world view differs drastically from the traditional Indian view in a significant number of areas. Major differences can be seen in attitudes and behaviors that are religious or spiritual, economic, social, political and educational. The purpose of becoming aware of these different world views is to help both cultures "celebrate the differences" (Highwater, 1981). With this in mind we will look at the Indian world view in each of the areas named above and compare it to the dominant culture's world view. When we have learned to celebrate the differences perhaps we will learn to relate as human beings with a great deal in common.

Spiritual Views

Most of us are familiar with the Judeo-Christian approach to spirituality which is manifested through formalized religion. Briefly, it is a faith that believes in a personal God who is

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intimately involved in the lives of her people. (Most Christians, of course, refer to God as he, although theologians would maintain that God in androgenous.) The primary responsibility of the people is to obey the laws of God revealed in the scriptures. For many people the formal expression of their religious beliefs occurs on Sundays and occasional religious holidays.

For traditional Indians on the other hand, the spiritual or religious is integrated with all of life. John Bryde (1971) describes this as seeing God in all things, but I suspect that, being a Jesuit, he has been influenced by Teilhard de Chardin and perhaps has misunderstood the Indian point of view. In *The Primal Mind*, Jamake Highwater, a Blackfoot Indian, goes into great detail on this topic. He describes the Indian reverence for all life as an awareness of, in Hopi language, the *'a 'ne himu*, or "a mighty something" that exists within all things and gives them life and is the common bond among all loving things. for the Iroquois this is the *arenda*, or life force. This is not pantheistic, i.e., it does not assume each thing is a god, nor is it the presence of a personal God as understood in the traditional Christian sense. It is, however, personal, but to the best of my understanding, it is the personal *life energy* of the tree or deer or person (Highwater, 1981). An example of this is found in Frank Water's wonderful novel, *The Man Who Killed the Deer*, in which the main character, Martiniano, eventually learns to reclaim his Indian-ness and pray to the *life force* of the deer he has killed.

Believing the mighty something in all things deserves respect has obvious effects on the way Indian peoples interact with the physical world. It is a popular stereotype that Indians are ardent environmentalists and it is a positive stereotype that is aligned with the Indian world view. They believe that in doing damage to another person or thing they indeed do damage to themselves in some mystical sense.

The ritualization of spiritual beliefs is formalized in the western view through religious ceremonies or services. The Indian ceremonies frequently involve dance, a novelty in Christian services; in fact, dance is considered sacred to the Indian. Their spirituality is also expressed through art forms such as sand painting. There are places, such as kivas, for sacred ceremonies, but unlike Western cathedrals and churches, the kiva is built into the earth and a part of the earth rather than soaring toward the sky and the alleged home of the divine. This placement of a place of worship is symbolic of the contrast in spiritual vision between the two cultures; while the Indian's vision is earthy and sees the sacred in all the present environment, the Christian looks toward the skies as symbolic of the heavenly home, somewhere up there, of God and the angels and saints.

Sociological World View

I have talked in some detail about the Indians' spiritual values because they influence every other area of their lives. If we take this position and apply it to the social dimensions of Indian life we see a people eager to get along with others. A spirit of cooperation rather than one of competition motivates the Indian. It is the group that comes first, and it is what is good for the group that determines what the Indian will do. To stand out in a crowd or to be pointed out is a source of embarrassment. Indian children are taught not to be conspicuous or obvious. This trait greatly affects their performance in a classroom situation where they are asked to compete individually and raise their hands to answer questions, rather than to support and cooperate with their classmates.

Indians have larger families and come to consider many, more people family than most members of the dominant culture. Whether or not one is a member of an Indian family is dependent upon how the Indian person feels about that person. Uncles and aunts are like surrogate parents and cousins are like brothers and sisters.

Children have a unique position in the Indian home. They are not considered incompetent or immature, but people of a different size with the same rights as everyone else. Traditionally, Indian children aren't hit or yelled at by the parents of the child. When discipline is necessary, it is done by some relative assigned or volunteered to do the task. Children, as can be seen in the article, "To My Indian Daughter" by Lewis Johnson, are considered a gift to be treasured.

Although the focus is on the group and the good of the group, there is within it the respect for individuality. Highwater comments that among traditional Indians, those peoples who might be considered freaks or so odd as to be exiled from "normal" society are honored and esteemed as gifted. He tells the story of a transvestite in an Indian tribe who was highly honored and respected. The choice of transvestitism in no way detracted from his worth, in fact, it enriched his social status in the tribe. Highwater concludes, "And freedom is not the right to express yourself but the far more fundamental right to be yourself" (p. 172).

Economics

Until the Indians had interaction with the non-Indian worlds, the notion of an economic system based on the acquisition of material wealth was out of the question. Because of their sense of group, Indians are taught early on that sharing is proper and desirable. Rich people are those who have character traits the community admires. The non-Indian desire to get and increase capital worth, sometimes at the expense of others, runs counter to Indian values. This has caused significant problems for Indians in non-Indian economic systems and in the educational system. If the purpose of education is to get a degree in order to get a job and make a lot of money, one has lost the Indian student. And, in fact, the drop out rate among Indian students is outrageously high. Financial gain, the motivator of many non-Indian students, does not apply to Indian students.

The Indians became more involved with the dominant culture's economic system with the outbreak of World War II and the drafting of Indian youth. Many young Indians sent their checks home to families who were uninformed about the use or purpose of cash and would sometimes give whatever money they had to the first person who asked. Economic involvement with the non-Indians has prompted many Indians to believe that they must come to understand the dominant culture and be educated in its system, even if they choose to remain active participants in their own cultures. The introduction of coal mines on reservations in Northern Arizona and New Mexico has compelled Indians to learn the non-Indian economic system. Although, in large part, the economic life of the Indian tribes has been controlled by the Bureau of Indian Affairs, only through becoming informed economically have Indians been able to move toward self-determination. The Indian economic world view then is one that is focused on the sharing of wealth rather than on the private accumulation of wealth.

Political World View

In the Indian political vision, the tribe is ruled by a council that makes decisions by consensus. The council is generally made up of elderly men who are admired for their wisdom. The decision-making process may take hours or days, but everyone has his say and everyone's influence is felt before a decision is reached.

Before the invasion of 1492 that Jamake Highwater refers to in *The Primal Mind*, the Indian peoples of this continent had sophisticated forms of government. In fact, it was the format of the Iroquois that was the basis for the Constitution of the United States.

Indian Education

In order to understand Indian education, it is essential to understand the relationship of the Bureau of Indian Affairs with Indian peoples. This complex relationship dates back to 1834 when the BIA became the official trustee of the Indian peoples. Over the years, the policy of the BIA regarding Indians has moved from assimilation, to acculturation, to termination and finally, to self-determination. Each of these federal stances has profoundly affected the education of Indian peoples. As the goals changed, the educational system changed. We will look at each phase of policy development as it affected the educational system in a moment. Right now let us take a closer look at the BIA and how it has and does function.

A startling description of the BIA appears in the book *Our Brother's Keeper*. Edgar Cahn writes:

> The Bureau, unique among federal agencies, is the federal, state and local government of the Indians, and supplants or dominates the private sector as well. It is realtor, banker, teacher, social worker; it runs the employment service, vocational and job training program, contract office, chamber of commerce, highway authority, housing agency, police department, conservation service, water works, power company, telephone company, planning office; it is land developer, patron of the arts, ambassador from and to the outside world, and also guardian, protector and spokesman. Based in Washington, D.C., the Bureau's 16,000 employees are located in outposts extending like tentacles westward from the Potomac (1969, p. 11).

The Indians are dependent upon the BIA and subject to their approval for almost every move.

The Bureau holds in trust Indian monies and can decide how the money will be spent. In the *Arizona Republic* of February, 1987, the fraudulent use of Indian funds and resources was exposed by investigative reporters.

A further shock to those of us who live in a democratic society and assume others who live here are living in a democracy, is that Indians were not included in the Bill of Rights until 1968! And even with this inclusion, Indians are rarely in a financial position to hire attorneys to fight for any rights that are violated.

In its earliest years it was the hope of the BIA that Indians would be assimilated into the mainstream. This prompted the well known saying, "The only good Indian is a dead Indian," dead literally or figuratively. Based on this policy, BIA schools were established to educate Indian children in order for them to leave the reservation and live in the mainstream of society. The primary goal was to civilize the savage. Indian children were taken to boarding schools either voluntarily or forcibly. The children were forbidden to speak their primary language, and, if caught, were physically punished. The practice of native religions was suppressed, and children were sent to board with white families during vacations to make the assimilation process complete (Fuchs & Havighurst, 1972). The majority of educated adult Indians today well remember this system. And although the kidnapping has stopped and children are allowed to speak their native tongue, in most instances the children have heard these stories from their parents and grandparents, and the anger and resentment have been passed on.

It's not as if education were an alien idea to Indians before the BIA took over. The first formal education was foisted upon them by the early missionaries. In the east and midwest the

French Jesuits sought to teach and convert the Indians. Their technique was to befriend the Indians and then Christianize them. In the western part of the continent, the Spanish captured and enslaved the Indians and then attempted to teach them the Christian way. King James also put out a call for the education of Indians. Both Harvard and Dartmouth were originally founded for the education of Indian as well as English youth (Havighurst & Fuchs, 1971).

The leaders of the Indians had a different impression of how education worked. Benjamin Franklin reported on the Indian response to non-Indian education in his journal. He quotes an Indian chief in his journal as saying, "But you, who are wise, must know that different Nations have different Conceptions of things; and you will therefore not take it amiss, if our ideas of this kind of Education happen not to be the same as yours" (Havighurst & Fuchs, 1971, p. 3). The Indian leader goes on to say that several of their young men had gone to colleges, and when they returned home they knew nothing of how to survive in the real world. The Chief suggested that if the non-Indians were bright, they would send their young men to the Indian tribes and they would educate them and make men of them.

Actually, there were groups of Indians who became very much involved in formal education long before BIA involvement. The Senecas had requested teachers from George Washington; the Cochtaw nation had more than 200 schools and academies financed by itself until 1890. The Cherokees established schools, and the estimated literacy of Cherokees in the nineteenth century was as high as 90%. The Cherokee schools taught not only English but Cherokee as well, using the alphabet invented by Sequoyah.

When the BIA was put in charge of Indian education in 1890, the Indian run schools were closed down, and it was not until 1960 that Indian peoples would have a say in the education of their children.

In 1928, a commission was assigned by Congress to investigate Indian education on the reservations. The outcome of these investigations was the Meriam Report. Reading the highlights of the Meriam Report one is amazed that it has taken us as long as it has to come to where we are in Indian Education. A huge part of the problem is that the Indians have no tax base for their schools, so they have been dependent upon the federal government, through the BIA, for funds for education. The amount of money allocated for Indian education has varied depending upon the current administration's awareness of need in this area.

In the early years, the 1930's and early 1940's, the Meriam Report's recommendation to avoid, if at all possible, removing children from their parents was ignored. In the day-schools of this era one occasionally found some bilingual teaching as recommended by the report, but this was the exception, not the rule.

The majority of Indian children did not attend school in the 1930's and 1940's, and those who did frequently found themselves in overcrowded situations. The situation became dramatic during the war years because funds were almost non-existent. Boarding schools were closed down and children returned to their parents. Many day-schools also ceased functioning. Because of this, at the end of the war there were thousands of Indian children with little or no formal education. Hildegard Thompson, a one-time director of Indian Education, describes this situation in her book, *The Navajos' Long Walk for Education*. She writes:

> The decade of the 1940's can be described as a decade in which there was more backward than forward movement in meeting the need for school facilities. At the beginning of the decade approximately one-third of the Navajo school population was in attendance. At the the middle of the decade the rate had dropped to one-

fourth, and a backlog was building up each year with an added 1,000 to 1,200 pupils (Thompson, 1975, p. 118).

The fifties was a time to regroup. But the non-Indian goal of education for Indians was still assimilation into the mainstream. Special programs were set up throughout the country to accommodate the now teenage Indian students who had missed out on education because of World War II. One such school was the Sherman School in Riverside, California. Indian students, primarily from the southwest, were sent to board at Sherman school. One of these students was a young Hopi girl by the name of Polingaysi. Her English name was Elizabeth White. That is not what her name meant in English, but the name the missionaries had given her when she first attended school on the mesas. In her book, *No Turning Back*, Polingaysi recounts her experiences at Sherman and the incredible adjustment to life off of the reservation. Her case was unique because she chose to go to Sherman, and even at that, she found it incredibly painful because of the cultural differences.

If the fifties was a time to regroup, then the sixties was a time of renewed public and federal awareness of the dilemma of Indian education. Senator Robert Kennedy headed a committee to study the problem and report back to Congress. Out of this report came new legislation addressing the issues of education, especially among the poor. One of these laws, The Elementary and Secondary Education Act, greatly benefitted Indian schools. Under Title I of this law, Indians living in poverty stricken areas were able to receive additional funds for education. The Indian Education Act of the mid-1970's further aided the education of Indian peoples. This was the era of transition, when many BIA schools become a part of the public school system. Demonstration schools run solely by the Indians came into being at such places as Rough Rock, Arizona. It was the era of acculturation and termination. Acculturation would allow the Indians to remain on the reservation, but hoped that they would adopt non-Indian ways and behaviors. Termination was the worst possible option. This was an attempt to cut the Indian peoples off quickly and completely. The Indians on reservations were not trained to run their own affairs economically, and, in as much as money is power, they were left powerless, and living situations were abominable.

It seemed as if things were moving in a positive direction as we moved into the 1980's, and then two reporters working for the *Arizona Republic* wrote an expose of what was happening on the reservation. They exposed millions of dollars of fraud perpetrated by employees of the BIA. They explained how the funds intended for education barely trickled down to the schools. Perhaps the greatest tragedy was the high incidence of child molestation. It seems a perfect situation. The reservations are remote, and Indian children are taught to get along and not cause problems. In one situation a teacher was convicted of having molested over 150 Navajo boys over a nine-year period of time,

This is the dark side of the picture, but there is some light.

Current Trends

The light in Indian Education is an increased awareness of the needs of children from other cultures. The research in the past few years in bilingual-bicultural education is being disseminated among educators. Multicultural education is now a required course for all student teachers in the state of Arizona. The research is showing that students who begin their educational journey bilingually advance much more quickly than children who are taught in ESL (English as a Second Language) programs (Reyhner, 1988). According to Reyhner and his colleagues, language is the key. It is clearly the primary factor in the preservation of a culture, and it is apparently a key factor in the education of children from cultures with a different language.

In addition to an awareness among the educators of the dominant culture, there are a number of programs designed specifically to educate Indian adults to become teachers of their own children. One such program had its beginnings in Canada at the University of British Columbia in 1972. In 1986, nine of the graduates had obtained teaching positions (Archibald, 1986). We have recently accelerated our service to Indian students in the field of education at Prescott College, and a case study of that program concludes this paper.

Case Study

In April 1988 three core faculty from the Prescott College Adult Degree Program flew to Fort Defiance, Arizona, on the Navajo Reservation, to begin a group of thirteen Indian women in the Teacher Education Program. The purpose of the orientation was to introduce the women to the Prescott College philosophy of education and to present a program that would be bicultural in nature. It was our goal to continually keep in mind the traditional Indian world view. For example, when advising an Indian student I would sit beside her and make very little eye contact. Together we would focus our attention on the paper work and avoid discussing anything personal.

Without exception the women worked as teacher's aides and had at least two years of previous college experience. The older women, ranging in age from thirty-five to fifty-five, spoke Navajo. The younger women, those in their mid- to late-twenties, spoke English only. All of them lived with their families on the Navajo Reservation and held traditional values.

To support our goal of bicultural education we set up classes on the reservation using adjunct faculty from the local schools. One of the adjuncts worked as the on-site coordinator to help students with routine questions. The on-site courses allowed the women to stay at home with their families and to work together in a cooperative setting. These approaches were designed to accommodate our students' values. The Prescott College core faculty planned to return to the reservation once a month for advising throughout the first quarter.

As a result of this experiment on the Navajo Reservation, and an ongoing program with the Tohono O'odham nation in southern Arizona, a grant was submitted and funded by F.I.P.S.E. (The Fund for the Improvement of Post-secondary Education). The grant helped establish the Center for Indian Bilingual Teacher Training under the directorship of Annabelle Nelson.

Over the past two years the program has been enormously successful. Of the thirteen Navajo women who started the program, twelve have graduated and are teaching full-time on the reservation. Overall the program has a 95% completion rate and a 100% employment rate. The college's dream of helping to empower Indian people to educate their own children is coming true.

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